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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003346

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [PNAT](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [MOPS](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: MALIKI SAYS IRAQI POLICE NUMBER ONE PROBLEM;
ACCEPTS AMBASSADOR'S SOLUTION TO 'FLAG' ISSUE

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Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (S//REL GBR AUS) SUMMARY: On September 6, during a briefing on the Baghdad Security Plan (BSP), Prime Minister Maliki told MNF-I Commanding General (CG) Casey and the Ambassador that he sees reforming the Iraqi Police as his number one issue, and key to solving other related problems. When the CG briefed him on plans to clear future areas of Baghdad under the BSP, the PM did not object to clearing Sadr City. Maliki reacted surprised when told that Sunni regard the Shia ministers of electricity and health as favoring Shia and discriminating against Sunnis. The Ambassador proposed a face-saving solution to Kurdistan's "flying the Iraq flag" problem. The CG urged Maliki to encourage the Finance Minister to release previously promised funds for the rebuilding of Anbar Province. END SUMMARY.

Violence and Murders Down in Baghdad in August

12. (S//REL GBR AUS) On September 6, MNF-I Commanding General (CG) George Casey, and the Ambassador briefed Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki (PM) on comparisons of the months of July and August for violence in Baghdad, and on the results of public opinion polls in Baghdad in mid-August concerning militias. In general, August had the lowest rate of violence and murders since the month of April, down significantly from July, but with a violent surge during the last week of August. The CG was optimistic that while there would be "good weeks and bad weeks," the trend would be downwards. Public opinion polls showed that while many people in Sadr City thought that militias provided some security, nearly one-third also favored their disarmament. In the whole of Baghdad, most people thought that people joined militias for money, rather than for religious reasons or to provide security.

Iraqi Police the Prime Minister's Number One Problem

13. (S//REL GBR AUS) Noting that the MNF-I's polls showed that "security" was one reason why Baghdad citizens supported the militias, the PM added that he is most concerned about the Iraqi Police (IP), which he deemed his "number one issue" and the key to solving the other security-related problems. They have a deservedly bad reputation because the IP either "join militias, lend them their vehicles, or do not resist them because they are cowards." Probably fifty percent of the IP cars are used by militias, he added. A focused effort will be necessary to solve the IP problem.

The PM Did Not Object to Clearing Sadr City

14. (S//REL GBR AUS) The CG briefed the PM on his strategy for turning to Sadr City as a focus area of the Baghdad Security Plan (BSP). The CG said that Sadr City would be cleared in tranches, so as to concentrate security efforts in parts of Sadr City that see the most violence. The PM did not object to the strategy, though he did question the CG's choice of which area of Sadr City to clear first. The PM also suggested that the CG refrain from telling the residents of any particular neighborhood in advance that theirs would be the next area to be cleared. He urged the CG to act secretly in the future until all areas of Baghdad had been cleared. The CG assured PM that once the one area of Sadr City was cleared, he would consult with the PM before moving to the next area. (Note: Although the CG did not ask the PM to concur with the plan to clear Sadr City, the PM did not raise any immediate objections to this proposal. End Note.)

GOI Ministers should be "Ministers for all Iraqi Citizens"

15. (S//REL GBR AUS) The CG urged the PM to encourage his service ministers, especially those for health and electricity, to visit the cleared areas to show their solidarity with the Baghdad residents. Many of the cleared areas had mixed Sunni and Shia populations. The popular perception is that the Shia areas get medical services and electricity, and the Sunni areas are ignored. The PM seemed genuinely upset at this remark, and insisted that his ministers should be "ministers for all Iraqi citizens."

Ambassador's Solution to Kurdistan's Iraqi Flag Issue

16. (S//REL GBR AUS) The Ambassador proposed a solution to the

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Iraqi flag issue created when Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) President Masud Barzani allegedly "banned" the flying of the current (Ba'athist) Iraqi flag in Kurdistan, and permitting only the pre-Ba'athist July 14, 1958 Republican flag. This ban was based on an article in a Kurdistan law. The Ambassador proposed to the PM that Barzani abolish this article of the Kurdistan law, and in return the Kurds would fly the current Iraqi flag only over buildings housing central government offices. Citing an Arabic proverb about helping a stumbling horse, the PM agreed that he had to help Barzani save face, and he did not object to the Ambassador's solution. The PM did remark that he would now have to temporarily shelve a pre-existing plan to convoke a committee to examine the question of the Iraqi national anthem and national flag because people would say that he was "doing it because of Barzani."

Solving the Money Release Problem before going to Ramadi

17. (S//REL GBR AUS) When the CG asked about the PM's proposed trip to Ramadi, the PM replied that he would probably go later this week. The CG urged him to speak to Finance Minister Bayan Jabr, because the money that the GOI had promised to rebuild Anbar Province had yet to be released by the MOF. Somewhat surprised, the PM agreed that Anbar's tribal leaders needed money to fight terrorists, stabilize the province and start reconstruction. The CG closed by suggesting that he resolve the "MOF release of funds" issue before he goes to Anbar.

SPECKHARD